not talking about economic development, agricultural development, prices, etc. Farmers' suicides are basically confined to poor farmers of four to five acres of land or less and basically they are reeling under the indebted problems. Sir, this is the simplest problem which can be solved at national level. This is not a question of State policy. Punjab gives you an example that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please come to your question straightway ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI ARJUN KUMAR SENGUPTA: Any farmer who is having debt burden of above, say, five thousand or ten thousand rupees, of four to five acres of land, that loan will be waived. This is a policy of a national Government. The Agriculture Minister can ask the Finance Minister to immediately direct the nationalised banks that this would be provided. That will have an immediate effect. Dr. Alexander gave a very good example of how to do it in practice. But the policy can be taken up only at the national level by the Agriculture Minister and he can ask the Finance Minister to agree to that.

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR: Sir, this particular suggestion has been taken up by the Department of Agriculture with the Finance Minister. That is the reason why the Finance Minister has appointed a Committee. Its report is expected up to 8th June, 2007. We will see that appropriate action will be taken.

Amending the Human Organ Transplant Act

*363. SHRI SYED AZEEZ PASHA: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government plan to amend the Human Organ Transplant Act, 1994 to promote cadaver transplantation and brain stem cell transplantation; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. ANBUMANI RAMDOSS): (a) and (b) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

A Committee was constituted by the Delhi High Court for review of the Transplantation of Human Organs Act (THOA), 1994, and Rules framed thereunder. The recommendations of the Committee have been put on the website of the Ministry. After examining the recommendations of the Committee, it was felt that wider consultation with stakeholders will be advisable and a national consultation on the subject will be held in May, 2007.

SHRI SYED AZEEZ PASHA: Sir, I want to know from the hon. Minister, through you, with regard to transplantation of stem cell, whether they have studied the methods adopted in various Asian, European, and Latin American countries before putting it on the website of the Ministry.

DR. ANBUMANI RAMDOSS: Sir, in 2004, the Delhi High Court had ordered that a Committee should go into the issues pertaining to the transplant of human organs. In fact, we have a Human Organ Transplant Act, 1994. Since then, there have been lots of complaints coming to the Government and the courts. So, a Committee was formed in 2004 and the Committee gave its report in May, 2005 after deliberating and going through a lot of sittings. As part of the Government, we felt that set of recommendations needed to have more wider consultations with the general public and professionals. Since then, series of workshops have been organised to deliberate on the recommendations. In fact, the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation was entrusted with the job. Also, this recommendation of the Committee was put up on the website of the Ministry and we are eliciting views from different parts of the country. Sir, the final sitting of this Committee is going to be held on 18th May and we have elicited lots of views from different sections of society like NGOs, Civil Society Groups, doctors, and lawyers, and workshops have also been conducted.

Sir, coming back to the hon. Member's question about whether this Committee had gone into different laws of different countries, different countries have laws according to their own situations. In fact, the Western countries have set up different systems of transplantation of human organs. They have cadaver transplant system. Here, we have a live donor system. We cannot compromise our interest. But on the whole, Sir, we have elicited views of all sections of society and, as I have said, the final sitting of this Committee will be held on the 18th May, the coming month.

DR. K. MALAISAMY: Sir, normally the hon. Minister will be very exhaustive and comprehensive in his written reply. But today unusually it is very short. Sir, he has given the impression that recommendations have come and they are going to be implemented. I would like to ask a very specific question. What can be the time frame before which the recommendation can be implemented? The second part of my supplementary is, whether the recommendations could be implemented by various measures, and if so the measures that are conceived or envisaged are going to be adequate and effective.

DR. ANBUMANI RAMDOSS: Sir, some of the recommendations, which are going to be deliberated on 18th May, are like strengthening the Authorisation Committees. Sir, each State has an Authorisation Committee and this Committee gives permission for it. There are two categories od donors for transplanting of organs. One category is the related donor like father, mother, brother and sister. The second category is, we call it 'love and affection,' where the donor knows the person for quite some time or can be a distant relative. Sir, for both the categories, for the related donor, the patient or the recipient or the donor does not need to go to the Authorisation Committee. We have a Hospital Committee. But for 'love and affection' category, the Authorisation Committee of each State authorises that this is the person. And they know the person. Some criterion is there for donation of organs. This Authorisation Committee is going to be strengthened in all the States. We are having some issues arising, in fact from Delhi, Punjab and Tamil Nadu, where there are some rackets or where organs are being sold. All these issues are there. That is why, precisely, the entire Act is being strengthened. So, we are strengthening the AuthorisationCommittees and monitoring them. In future, we are going to monitor each and every transplant which takes place in our country. And also, Sir, we are setting up, in fact ORBOs, *i.e.* Organ Retrieval Banking Organisations. We have one in AIIMS (All India Institute of Medical Sciences). So, we want to replicate that initially in four Metros. We are now having a national programme. For organ transplant, in fact, this year, an amount of one crore has been envisaged. The Planning Commission has sanctioned that amount. We are trying to encourage cadaver transplant. We are making the punishment more stringent. This is part of the recommendations which are going to be deliberated.

SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Mr. Chairman, Sir the hon. Minister has given a detailed response on different aspects of this problem. But one problem which is also noticed is that in different hospitals, without the knowledge of the poor people, their organs are taken. I do not know what steps the Government is taking or what efforts the Government is making, but if this kind of a situation arises, the punishment has to be really deterrent. And also, Sir, as he said, cadaver transplant is very important-and which is possible in our country also-and for that, educating the people is also more important. Rs. one crore may not be even good enough for this kind of promotion. What is the Government's plan to educate the people so that they could offer their cadavers? In many cases, Sir,...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let him speak.

SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: One second, Sir. For eye donations, a lot of forms are filled up, but when a person dies, people do not come to pick up his eyes. That becomes a useless thing. How do you want to strengthen that?

DR. ANBUMANI RAMDOSS: Sir, more stringent punishment will be given in a case where the organs of a person are being taken unknowingly or without his knowledge. That is a criminal offence, and against the persons who are invovled, whether a doctor or his accomplices, very stringent action under the law will definitely be taken against them.

DR. KARAN SINGH: Will be or has been taken?

DR. ANBUMANI RAMDOSS: Has been taken and will be taken. It is both.

Coming to the second part of this question about cadaver transplant, Sir, the hon. Member is right that this is something which needs a lot of expansion, and this is precisely why we are setting up this ORBO (Organ Retrieval Banking Organisation). This is literally an Organ Bank which will be set up initially in Metros and, then, we will try to set up these Banks in each State Capital. And they will be coordinative among themselves. This ORBO will be entrusted with the jobs of coordinating, having a lot of IECs, propagating this cadaver transplant, having counsellors, grief counsellors and counsellors set up in different hospitals. There are two types of cadaver transplant. One is brain stem dead patient, and the second is cadaver dead, *i.e.* a dead person. So, for both these persons, transplant of organs

could be done, and for that, the relative needs to be counselled. If some coma patient is there, these counsellors have to go and talk to his relatives. A lot of things have been done, and efforts have been made. This Rs. one crore money is for an initial concepts, and definitely, we are going to set up mroe ORBOs. Setting up of one ORBO will cost the Government literally about seven to ten crores of rupees. So, we are trying to set up these ORBOs initially in the four Metros and, then, we are going to expand them in other parts of the country.

Decline in cultivable land

*364. SHRIMATI N. P. DURGA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that *per capita* availability of cultivable land in the country has declined from 0.27 hectares in 1980 to 0.16 hectares in 2005;

(b) if so, how the Central Government are persuading the States to formulate suitable legislation to bring more and more land under cultivation and use less agriculture land for non-agricultural purposes such as roads, industries, etc; and

(c) to what extent Government's Watershed Development Programmes such as National Watershed Development Project for Rainfed Areas, Soil Conservation for Enhancing Productivity in Degraded lands, Integrated Wasteland Development Programme, etc. have helped it in bringing more and more area under cultivation?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) to (c) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House

Statement

(a) to (c) Yes, Sir. As per available estimates, the per capita availability of cultivable land has declined from 0.27 ha. in 1980-81 to 0.17 ha in 2004-05 due to increase in population and diversion of agricultural land for non agricultural purposes such as urbanization, roads, industries etc. There is a marginal decline in agricultural land from 185.09 million ha. in 1980-81